



Northern Oil Company
US Army Corps of Engineer Photo

Operation RIO Update

19 Sep 2003

An update for all SWD employees and Operation RIO volunteers supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Mission Update: Production increased this week from the previous week due to completion of several repair projects. In fact, a new record high was set today with 1.87 million barrels of crude produced.

Production of refined products, augmented by importation, has improved over the last week also. The team is beginning to anticipate winter requirements for fuel products as winter comes to Iraq in January. Although winter, lasting only 3 months, is short lived in Iraq, the demand for refined products during that time jumps drastically.

TF RIO has been so successful in its mission that GEN Abazaid, CDR CENTCOM, has asked USACE to field a "RIO-like" organization to assist with the electrical power challenges. USACE is in the process of fielding Task Force Restore Iraqi Electricity (TF RIE) and RIO is, in essence, acting as RIE's "sponsor." This speaks highly to the professionalism and success of all our RIO volunteers.

A Message from the Chief :

Heroes: I wanted to personally let you know that a convoy carrying two U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees was attacked near Baghdad on 17 Sep. A security detail accompanied the convoy.

The two employees are: Susan Tianen from the Los Angeles District, who was not injured, and Ghassem Khosrownia from the Sacramento District, who suffered non life-threatening injuries and will be transferred to CONUS for treatment. Both Susan and Ghassem were eager to get right back to work.

I am immensely proud of Susan and Ghassem's selfless service. They volunteered to deploy knowing that their work would help the Iraqi people.

The attack is a reminder that many of your Corps brothers and sisters remain in potential harm's way. Right now, 418 Corps employees are deployed in the U.S. Central Command area of operation, with 238 of them in Iraq. If it's in your culture, please say a prayer for them.

As the Corps supports reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the oil and electricity missions in Iraq, we will continue to need all the talent and dedication Corps employees have to offer. It's through your efforts that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will accomplish its tremendously important work. I'm tremendously thankful for you and for all you do daily for the nation and the Armed Forces. Keep pressing on.

Essayons!

Bob Flowers

Hurricane Isabel Update: Hurricane Isabel made landfall on the East coast of the United States early Thursday. As it moved ashore in the vicinity of North Carolina, it slowed down and dropped from a Class V to a strong Class II, still capable of inflicting high damage. Some areas from North Carolina to New York City will experience up to 5 to 11 inches of rain in addition to high winds and wave damage. OPM closed all agencies in Washington D.C. because of the high levels of rain and because the Mass Transit System was shut down. As of early Friday morning, about 2 million families were without power on the East Coast.

As the Corps, FEMA, and residents from the Carolinas to New York prepare for Hurricane Isabel, it is well to recall our rapid response to the devastation of Hurricanes Camille (1969) and Andrew (1992) and Tropical Storm Agnes (1972). Vignette #73 deals with Camille and Agnes. Vignette #55 deals with Andrew.

www.hq.usace.army.mil/history/vignettes/Vignette_73.htm (Camille and Agnes)

www.hq.usace.army.mil/history/vignettes/Vignette_55.htm (Hurricane Andrew)

A view from down range: Naim Rizk

By Wayne Stroupe

In addition to his knowledge of engineering and the Arabic and English languages, Egyptian born Naim Rizk brought other vital ingredients to Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil (RIO) during his four-month deployment - wisdom, kindness, compassion, and a unique understanding and perspective of the special problems facing the Iraqis and Americans in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Rizk, an electrical engineer in the Army Materiel Command's Communications and Electronics Command at Fort Monmouth, N.J., volunteered after the terrorist attacks on Sep. 11, 2001, to assist in any way possible. "I wanted to serve my country," Rizk said.



He got his chance on May 18, 2003, when he deployed with Task Force RIO, a small group of approximately 70 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers personnel who are working with the people of Iraq to rebuild the country's oil production facilities and infrastructure. RIO has a \$1 billion program consisting of 222 projects.

For Task Force RIO, Rizk used both his engineering expertise and his language skills. "My technical engineering expertise was used most of the time, working oil facilities repair, security issues and related subjects.

On the language side, I could understand about 90 percent of what was spoken; the local dialects were sometimes a little hard to understand."

Rizk worked the northern and southern oil fields at Rumalayah, just west of Basrah, Iraq. His normal engineering tasks included checking the progress of oil facility and infrastructure repair and reconstruction projects, inspecting contractors' work, solving problems and handling a host of daily crises.

"It was very important for me to bring in the Iraqis. I needed them to gain expertise, and I wanted and needed them to be involved. They were initially reluctant to release any info. They thought we had just come for the oil; that we were going to take their jobs.

"Once the Iraqis realized we were here to help, they had high hopes that everything would change overnight. They thought Americans were rich and powerful," Rizk said. But the years of neglect of the nation's utility infrastructure and the looting that occurred severely hampered restoration of basic services. "When it didn't happen quickly, the Iraqis got very frustrated. We had a focus and a mission, we just couldn't get the message to the Iraqis."

The lack of electricity, bottled gas for cooking, gas for vehicles, and drinking water soon led to several demonstrations and then small riots in Iraq, including in Basrah.

On Aug. 9, Rizk and another RIO team member were driving through northern Basrah en-route to an oil facility. "We were in the wrong place at the wrong time," Rizk said. They drove into an angry mob of hundreds. "I thought that was it! They knocked out all of the car windows and were beating on the car. I had the strangest feeling - 'why did these people want to kill us!'. It didn't make sense."

The two RIO workers managed to ease their vehicle down the street to some nearby British soldiers for protection. "It was my scariest moment in Iraq," Rizk said.

Even though that day was frightening, Rizk holds no ill will. "The Iraqi people are basically very nice. Things are changing drastically for them. They are having a hard time understanding freedom and the power that goes with it. For so long they were told what to do. Now the Iraqis have to make decisions on their own at all levels to succeed. Things will become more stable as time goes by, but it is going to take time."

Even though the Iraqi people may not have been initially impressed by the great strides made by Task Force RIO, Rizk was. "The progress of the oil projects? Everything is moving. I'm surprised at how well it has gone. In May when I arrived, oil production in the Rumalayah oil fields was zero. We're now up to about 70 percent capacity (800,000 barrels a day)."

While he was working with oil field construction projects to improve Iraq's future, Rizk aided with another project that will also improve Iraq's future, but from another direction. Rizk was one of the main proponents in Task Force RIO to sponsor and officially adopt the Rumalayah School, which educates many of the children of the oil facility workers in the area. RIO team members originally donated \$400 to buy notebooks, pens, pencils and other educational supplies for the school. As additional donations came in, from both the RIO team and from generous Americans back home, they were delivered to the school.

"Education is very important to the future of Iraq," Rizk said. "In engineering, you need a strong foundation for a building. Education is the right 'foundation' for Iraq. The Arabic world is not heavily industrialized, so education is the avenue out of poverty. Education is the key."

Additional boxes of school supplies that arrived were stockpiled in storage areas. On Sept. 4, Rizk and three Corps team members from Task Force RIO delivered 30 boxes of educational supplies to the school.

The facility's high school principal, Ahmed Mustafa, was elated with the donations. Speaking through Rizk as interpreter, Mustafa spoke of the importance of the donations. "These new materials will help encourage the kids to come to school. It will encourage them to learn!"

As he prepared to return home, Rizk looked back on his deployment. "It was my first time to deploy. It was a great experience, both technically and socially, since I was working with many different kinds of people. I will miss the folks I worked with; the Corps people were fantastic!"

"I learned a lot. I am very, very lucky to live in America after what I've seen, especially how the Iraqis live. It makes you appreciate what we have. I know America is the best country in the world, because of our people. Americans work together, and their generosity is helping the whole world. The Iraqis don't understand this, yet."

Even though he missed his family and friends, Rizk said he would deploy again. "I didn't get to finish all of the things and projects I wanted to."

Rizk did admit to one reservation he had prior to deploying. "I thought my age (64) would be a problem, but it wasn't. Some people on the RIO team came to me for advice. In the Middle East, an older person is respected for their knowledge and their age. I am just really happy I had the opportunity to serve my country."

Naim, from the Corps of Engineers Task Force RIO team members that worked with you, we are all glad we had a chance to serve with you!

Scheduled For Deployment: Deploying to the CRC on 21 Sep 03: Travis Stanford (Little Rock District) and Jama Hatcher (Little Rock District), Paul Lauderdale (Fort Worth District), Ralph Bledsoe (Galveston District), Marjorie Courtright, (Tulsa District), Judy Scott (Fort Worth District).

Scheduled to Return: Charles Miles, Tulsa District 9/23/2003, Nola Conway, Walla Walla District 9/27/2003, Michael DeMasi, Galveston District 9/27/2003

Corps Supports Iraqi School

by Wayne Stroupe

For many years, the children of Iraq could only learn subjects and materials approved by the former regime of Saddam Hussein. Now, along with a newfound freedom of knowledge in Iraq, schools are facing new problems, including a lack of educational materials. However, one school in southeastern Iraq is getting a helping hand from the members of Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil (RIO) and from generous Americans back home.

The Rumalayah School is located approximately 25 miles west of Basrah in southern Iraq in the Al Rumayla oilfield area. Many of the students are children of Iraqi workers who staff a nearby pump station and gas-oil separation facility. The teachers and staff are committed to educating the students, and the children are eager to learn. But the available and necessary educational materials – notebooks, pens, pencils, etc., items we take for granted in American schools - are in short supply in many Iraqi schools.

The Corps of Engineers originally contacted the school to rent its building for administrative purposes following the war. For three days, Task Force RIO rented the school to process identification badges for Iraqi Southern Oil Company workers ready to return to their jobs in the local facilities.

This contact led to an effort, spearheaded by Steve Wright, one of the Task Force RIO public affairs personnel, to support the school under the Corps "Adopt-a-School" program. The Corps uses the program extensively in the United States to support local schools. Task Force RIO Commander Brig. Gen. Robert Crear approved the idea, and it became reality.

Task Force RIO team members got the program jump started by contributing almost \$400 to locally purchase notebooks, pens, and other supplies, including some sports equipment. These supplies were soon delivered to an appreciative school.

Kellogg, Brown and Root, TF RIO contractor, donated a much needed copier to the school.

Also, RIO team members with school or community service contacts in the states notified their family and friends at home about the effort. Soon, additional boxes of supplies began arriving by mail.

After Wright returned home, Naim Rizk, an Egyptian-born electrical engineer from the Army Materiel Command who was attached to Task Force RIO as an engineer and interpreter, continued the effort to support the school. Rizk was instrumental in helping support Wright and the Adopt-A-School program from its inception.

"Steve (Wright) organized everything originally. When he left, I inherited it by default," said Rizk jokingly.

Rizk looks at the school support, education, and its relationship to the Corps mission from engineering, humanitarian, and Arabic perspectives.

"Iraqis are extremely educated and knowledgeable. If they can break through their main handicap, freedom of thinking, they will move rapidly forward," Rizk said.

Such humanitarian support benefits all. "We do it because it is the right thing to do. We even had medical personnel that looked after a young girl's eye," Rizk said.

By assisting the school and its students, word about the aid was passed to the parents, many of whom work in the local oil facilities. This fostered additional cooperation and trust between the local Iraqis and Task Force RIO personnel.

"The Arabic world is not heavily industrialized, so education is the avenue out of poverty," Rizk said. "Education is the key. We have to give the Iraqis the freedom to learn and trust them to do the right thing. You have to trust."

As additional boxes of school supplies continued to arrive, they were stockpiled in the Task Force RIO storage area. On Sept. 4, Rizk and three Corps team members from Task Force RIO, along with two "shooters" (Army soldiers providing security) sped north in two trucks to deliver almost 30 boxes of school supplies to the school.

The facility's high school principal, Ahmed Mustafa, was elated with the donations. The materials were unloaded by some of the school's students and staff and the Task Force RIO members.

Speaking through Rizk as interpreter, Mustafa spoke of the importance of the donations. "These new materials will help encourage the kids to come to school. It will encourage them to learn!"

Mustafa, principal since 1985, explained that the school is a shared facility with elementary students in the morning and high school students in the afternoon. He is in charge of



approximately 350 high school students and also teaches six classes. The school, established in 1979, offers classes Oct. 1 through June 1.

Mustafa is excited and apprehensive about the future. "In the past, the school and what we could teach, was controlled by Baghdad. Now we can teach openly. But security is a problem. The future is

very, very promising -- if security is increased."

The school supplies donated by Task Force RIO team members and generous Americans at home will make life better at one school in southern Iraq. As Iraqi stability and security grow, so will Iraq's most precious commodity for its future – its children, the leaders of tomorrow.

"HOOAH!!"

*MICHAEL L. SCHULTZ, COLONEL, EN
Acting Commander,
Southwestern Division*